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File Vietnam

26 July 1967

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [redacted]

SUBJECT : Additional Information on the Infiltration of Supplies and Personnel to South Vietnam

Attached is the additional information on the Communist logistical system in the Laos Panhandle that we have prepared at your request.

[redacted]

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Chief, Trade and Services Division

Distribution: (S-2408)

Orig. & 1 - Addressee
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OER/T/[redacted] (26 July 67)

Supplement to Project S-2408

Estimate of the Infiltration of Supplies and Personnel to South Vietnam

1. Capacities of the LOC's

During the past year the Communists have generally maintained or slightly improved the overall capacity of the road network that is used for logistic support of the Communist forces in South Vietnam. During recent months they have also built a significant extension to the network that now permits truck traffic to cross the border directly from Laos into South Vietnam for the first time. The capacity of the routes to deliver supplies to forward areas along the Laotian border continues to be restricted by capacities in Laos, rather than those in North Vietnam.

Table 1 shows the change in the estimated capacities of the major routes in southern North Vietnam and the Laotian Corridor. Capacities of the routes in the southern part of North Vietnam have been increased due to new construction of bypasses and use of multiple facilities such as highway ferries, fords, and pontoon bridges. Capacities of the two major routes to the DMZ - Routes 1A and 101 - have not changed greatly, but capacities of the routes leading to the Laotian Corridor have increased considerably. Route 15 to Mu Gia Pass appears to have been improved to the extent that the capacity is now estimated at 740 short tons a day in the dry season and 250 tons a day in the rainy season compared with an estimate

of 450/100 tons a day nearly a year ago. Route 137, the other road leading to the Laotian Corridor, is also believed to have been improved slightly, from 450/100 tons to 500/100 tons.

Capacities of Laotian roads leading from these border crossings have not been maintained quite as well as they were last year, although these capacities still far exceed the average level of traffic observed moving over the routes. The dry season capacity of Route 12 leading from Mu Gia Pass is now estimated to be about one-fourth less than it was earlier and Route 23 capacity is possibly about 40 percent less. The reduced quality of these roads may be the combined result of bombing and of greater rain fall than usual during the dry season in the Mu Gia Pass area on the Laotian side of Annam Mountains. Route 912 leading from the other border crossing still has a capacity of about 200/40.

Dry season capacities of routes further south in the Corridor are more or less the same as they were last year, and it is estimated that the routes continue to have the capacity to support at least 400 tons a day to the ends of the routes in the border area. Half of this total can be moved into South Vietnam on Route 922 which now extends about 35 miles from the border into the A Shau valley.

Through capacities of the Laotian routes south of Route 9 during the rainy season are now estimated to be zero for truck

traffic based on the experience of the past rainy season. Actual capacities, however, will depend on the measures that Communists take to maintain traffic. Last year they made no apparent effort to keep the roads open for truck traffic during the rainy season.

2. Utilization of the Route Capacity and Traffic Density

The level of traffic observed moving on the routes is low compared with the capacity of the routes, and the number of trucks compared with the mileage of routes used is also low. These factors have made aerial interdiction of the truck supply route exceedingly difficult.

A comparison of the capacity of Route 15 (740 tons/day during the dry season) at Mu Gia with the estimated tonnage moved on the route (19 trucks carrying 57 tons/day) during the past dry season reveals that on the average only about 8 percent of the route capacity has being utilized. If all of this tonnage was moved south in Laos on Route 12 where the route capacity is estimated to be 350 tons per day in the dry season, about 16 percent of the capacity was used on the average. Even smaller portions of the capacity of routes further south appeared to be used as the trucks fanned out over various routes from the junction of Routes 12 and 23.

It is estimated that the Communists utilized between 400 and 600 trucks on the approximately 700 miles of roads that they control in the Panhandle. Thus they are using less than one

truck per mile of roads. Although certain roads are used more than others, thus creating traffic densities higher than the average, the most frequently used roads do not carry a significantly high density of traffic. Route 12 can be used as an example. Assuming that 19 trucks per day moved south and 19 trucks moved north each day during the past dry season, about 38 trucks a day would have moved over the route. Most of these trucks moved in hours of darkness, or in about 12 hours. Thus only an average of about 3 trucks per hour moved past any one point on the road.

Other factors making aerial interdiction of the route and the destruction of trucks difficult are the simplicity of the network (e.g., no big bridges, dirt roads that are easily repaired after attack) and the preparation of alternate routes, bypasses, turnouts, and truck parks. Alignment of the roads was selected in areas that afford maximum concealment from the air as well as best conditions for road maintenance.

3. Tonnage Delivered into Laos from North Vietnam and Cambodia During 1966-67

Table 2 presents the basic computation of the total tonnage made available in Laos by traffic via all routes during the year beginning 1 October 1966.

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